

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2004

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 3 **APPROVED**

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: NEED FOR TIMELY PERTINENT INFORMATION FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, VETERINARY SERVICES ON CURRENT DISEASE SITUATIONS AFFECTING HORSES.

DATE: OCTOBER 27, 2004

BACKGROUND:

In recent years, the U.S. horse industry has had to deal with the occurrence of a number of important infectious diseases, including West Nile virus (WNV) and, most recently, Vesicular Stomatitis (VS).

Currently, anyone seeking up-to-date information regarding an infectious disease occurrence in horses will find it difficult to obtain. It requires an extensive effort via the internet and/or by phone contact with affected states. The existing United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website provides little information on any equine disease of concern.

In addition, information on international trade restrictions is virtually impossible to find. While the countries with restrictions on the import of horses because of WNV are few, some, such as Brazil, are important trading partners of the United States. Limitations in available information is even more glaring with regard to the current VS situation in Texas, Colorado and New Mexico. The USDA website includes trade restriction information for only three countries: Korea, Canada and the European Union, and in fact, posted requirements for Korea are out of date. The International Regulation Retrieval System (IRRS) lists the latest update for horses for export to Korea as January 2004. There were no more recent updates available through the USDA website. Currently, USDA does not list any state requirements for movement of animals from VS-affected states, although several states have imposed movement restrictions.

In the past, the USDA has played a key role in providing extensive and timely reports to the horse industry and to state animal health officials regarding important disease outbreaks in the United States. These reports have always included what information was available on the epidemiological findings in such outbreaks as well as information on domestic and international movement restrictions. The USDA is the appropriate agency to compile this information accurately and to make it readily available. This committee strongly recommends that the agency give consideration to ways and means of enhancing what is currently being provided.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to enhance its current program of gathering data on outbreaks of infectious diseases with the cooperation of the states in order to provide up-to-date information on such outbreaks, as well as state and international movement restrictions and other pertinent information to stakeholders and state animal health officials on a regular and timely basis.

RESPONSE:

The Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (VS), is currently developing a user-friendly website for equine disease information and surveillance data. This web site will provide extensive and timely updates for use by industry and State animal health officials. Included on this website will be VS situation reports (epidemiological findings), maps, information on

State movement restrictions (both interstate and international), information for international trade restrictions, contact points, and links to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories. In addition, Emergency Management Operation Center notices and warnings will also be distributed via this website when any new State is involved in an outbreak and for each new species affected.

Under the direction of the VS National Surveillance Unit, several productive meetings were held to develop this user-friendly website. Future meetings are scheduled with representatives of the equine industry and sponsors of the resolution to finalize plans for the website design. We anticipate having a working website by August 2005.